9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

chief. If he was not qualified then one of his younger brothers, or one of father's brothers or uncles was chosen. Yet, the fiction of equal access to the *nam* was important to the Mossi because it enabled them to adhere to their most important political axiom which was that "The only man who should rule is one who can keep the country." Regencies were avoided, and persons with physical and character defects were barred. Moreover, this flexibility gave the electors a wide choice of candidates from which to choose the person best fitted for chieftainship at any given period. The Mossi have always believed that it is difficult to rule men and this is what they mean when they declare: "Nanamsè toumdè ya yida fa fa"—"The work of the chiefs is the most difficult of all."[3] For example, it does not seem like an accident that the first ruler, Moro Naba Wubri, was succeeded by four of his brothers in turn instead of by his sons. The Mossi had not completely conquered the territory, and the young sons were incapable of handling the complex political situation. The graves of each of the successors to Wubri in different parts of the country remain as markers to testify to the difficult task which the early rulers had in controlling their realm.

The Mossi believed, and still do believe, that it was only when conflict developed after a ruler died, that the people realized how necessary and valuable a chief was. The death of a chief, especially of the Moro Naba, was kept a secret until the war minister arrived at the capital with his troops. Only then did the cry go up: "The fire has gone out!"; and as soon as it was heard, violence broke out throughout the land. Prisoners were released, thieves rifled the markets, and the *nakomcse*, or nobles, rode about the countryside doing whatever they wished. This custom persisted as late as 1942. Reporting to his superior in Abijan about the events that transpired in Wagadougou when Moro Naba Kom died, the French commander wrote: "On Friday, March 13, 1942, young people, profiting from old custom, tried to steal things, but they were stopped and about one hundred were arrested."[4] Throughout all the chaos which attended the death of a king, the war minister remained calm unless an attempt was actually made to seize power. He never attempted to stop the public disorder or to catch thieves or murderers, because everyone believed that out of